



Sinterklaas and his Zwarte Piet were special guests as MAMBO kicked off the holiday season

In Aruba, one really knows the holidays are here when MAMBO, the association of main Street and Oranjestad shopkeepers begin their holiday campaigns. Saturday, Dec 1 the Caya Betico Croes was open only to pedestrian traffic, and not only shopping, but all the things the season is known for was to be found along the sidewalks. This will continue every Saturday until Christmas.

There were fun and games for the children, traditional holiday music of the region from gaita groups, and most importantly, a visit from Sinterklaas and many of the shops, including the playground over the Tieleman store at the end of the street.

There are scores of Sinterklass songs, and the children sang them all as waited in anxious anticipation for the man himself to appear. When he did finally arrive in the late afternoon, along with his assistants, the Zwarte Piets, the youngsters where jumping up and down with excitement. Sinterklaas sat with his big book, and as each child in the book was called forward, he queried the awestruck children on their behavior of the past year, and rewarded them with a gift for being good children.

The Sinterklaas feast day is on December 5, and he usually arrives on the island two weeks before, making various appearances at schools and shops until he departs the island quietly on December 6. His Zwarte Piet will usually distribute sweets to the children, though they have been known to grab naughty children and attempt to put them in their bags to take them off to Spain. Therefore, the idea of who has been “naughty or nice” makes a definitely impression on young children!